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Freedom of information

An 'unshackled' CIA is dangerous

To the Editor:

I commend the editorial of April 23 titled, "Unshackling the CIA won't give it intelligence."

As a victim of CIA spying, I testified recently before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence against Senate Bill 2284, which would have legalized the abuses prohibited in the original CIA charter. The proposed limiting of dissemination of information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) would give the CIA an opportunity to protect itself from the embarrassment of revealing its mistakes, its illegal activities and its failure to properly evaluate intelligence material.

It was through information obtained under the FOIA that much of the CIA's illegal and unconstitutional activities in the past were revealed. Yet even this material, when we received it, was so extensively censored that some pages were completely blank to protect the rights of informers and agents.

It is truly an Alice in Wonderland concept to think that the rights of informers engaging in illegal activities need to be protected by the blanket of national security while the rights of Americans and organizations

openly exercising their constitutional privileges should be violated and kept hidden by the intelligence agency.

The files we obtained on Women Strike for Peace included Xerox copies of our own newsletters, correspondence and even notices of "White Elephant" sales.

The bills before the Senate would continue to allow the CIA to spy on American citizens and engage in fishing expeditions that would authorize surveillance of innocent Americans and could involve burglarizing their homes, reading their mail, infiltrating their organizations or bugging conversations.

All of this illegal activity could be done under a section which states — "Counterintelligence . . . activities may be directed against United States persons concerned, only on the 'basis of facts' or 'circumstances' which reasonably indicate that the person is or may be engaged in clandestine intelligence activity." If a person inadvertently spoke to someone the CIA had targetted as suspicious, that person could be a victim of surveillance without his knowledge.

An "unshackled" CIA resulted

in the overthrow of the Mossadegh government in Iran and his replacement by the shah, whose denial of human rights was the catalyst for the holding of hostages today.

The role of the CIA in Chile, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; to name a few, are all examples of an unshackled agency that cannot forget its World War II Office of Strategic Services origins.

The CIA's drug-pushing program, which resulted in at least one death we know of, and the poison testing program in cities should have resulted in the arrest and conviction of those agents guilty of the crimes. We have no way of determining whether such acts continue to be carried out, and if the CIA continues unshackled, we will never know.

The editorial properly states that "The primary mission of the Agency is not covert operations . . . it is to gather intelligence, to analyze it and disseminate it to those who need it." The American people should not accept anything more.

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